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ABSTRACT

This description of family day care (FDC) in the past, present, and future draws on personal experiences and a literature review. The discussion of FDC of the past centers on the rarity and general negativity of literature on FDC before 1970; early restrictions on FDC; the process of learning how to provide appropriate educational experiences for FDC providers; and attempts at statewide organization of FDC providers. Description of today's FDC reflects accomplishments in professional recognition, licensing and regulation, support services for providers, the emergence of FDC as a small business, and increased research on FDC. It is argued that FDC is at a crossroads. Middle class and affluent parents, as well as politicians and employers, use it. Quality of care is probably the biggest issue facing FDC. High quality is more likely to be achieved by self-motivation augmented by appropriate support services than by a carrot and stick approach. As for the future of FDC, the scenario of a presidential candidate who was formerly an FDC provider is considered. It is proposed that day care center directors recruit trained personnel from FDC organizations and FDC providers establish their own insurance company. Problematic trends include increased group size at FDC homes and the increasingly adversarial distance between FDC providers and parents that will arise as providers become professionals. (RH)

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YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

by

June Solnit Sale

Speech delivered at the Save The Children Family Day Care Conference, April 28, 1988

It is with love, admiration and concern that I begin this word painting of family day care. It is with the recognition that my painting is colored by my own experiences that I present this picture for you to examine and explore. Consider it a piece of art that you may or may not wish to own, but I hope you can accept that it is a personal gift that I take great pleasure in giving to the women and men who perform the most important and demanding work our country most needs. . . that of caring for our children.

In reviewing the literature and recollecting my own experiences with family day care, I am reminded of a recent article I read concerning a conference on women and the media. One of the speakers representing the National Women's Political Caucus said that the Virginia Slims slogan of "You've come a long way, baby" should be changed to "You've come a short way and don't call me baby." In many respects, we have come a long way, but for sure don't call us babysitters.

As I have said this is a personal view and so it must begin with my beginnings and my work with family day care. In 1970 Yolanda Torres and I began a program at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, California called the Community Family Day Care Project. One of our goals was to obtain accurate knowledge about FDC, not based on information one gets from a visit with a questionnaire: not the information one surmises from one visit, which might be a peek-through-a

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window on day care; but rather an ongoing, monthly-yearly relationship--in other words, an examination from within a FDC home, a look from the inside rather than from the outside (Sale & Torres 1971 and 1972).

YESTERDAY

Prior to our project the literature was sparse and quite negative concerning the subject of FDC. The only positive expression about the largest form of out-of-home child care was heard from from Alice Collins, Eunice Watson,and Arthur Emlen in Portland, Oregon. The rest of the literature described FDC care as "babysitting," "unsupervised," and "custodial." But nowhere was there a description of what happens to children in the home, how a family day care provider functions and what services were provided to its users.

When we initiated our project, most people we queried didn't know the term "family day care." When we would explain the program they would say, "oh, you mean babysitting." In fact, many of the providers called themselves babysitters. But I can assure you that no one in our project ever used that term after a short time of meeting together. In fact our first report to the Office of Child Development was titled "I'm Not Just A Babysitter" and this was taken from the words of a provider who told us, "I'm not just a babysitter -- I'm a day care mother. A sitter comes in for an hour and you tell her what you want for your child. I decide about meals, what time they are served, what to do, when and why. In other words, I'm a substitute mother. So, I'm not a sitter-- I'm a day care mother."

Today the term family day care mother is not acceptable, because men have entered the field and although they are few, we welcome them.

But it is important to tell the world that what family day care providers do and are is more than mothering or nurturing, although that is certainly an essential and important part of the picture. It is more than staying at home and "watching" the children. The job description for a person that works in their home with children of all ages requires experience, knowledge and education that is not readily available in most institutions of higher learning. It requires the wisdom of a parent, the knowledge of a social worker, the skills of a pediatrician, the tact of a mediator and the patience of a saint. So, what we are called and what we do are coming into closer approximation when we include the words <u>family</u> and <u>care</u>.

When I first started to work in the field of family day care in California several significant restrictions existed:

* it was illegal for infants (up to the age of 2 1/2) to be cared for in a group or in center care, leaving family day care the only way parents could find out-of-home care for their babies and toddlers.
* men were unable to obtain a license as the sole caregiver. Although the law did not directly prohibit men from becoming providers, the unwritten, but well known understanding was that men were "not suitable" to take care of young children.
* the licensing function for family day care was in the same department as foster care and a licensor would typically be responsible for both foster and family day care. It should be noted that child care center licensing was located in the State Department of Social Services, in a department called

Community Care, while the licensing of family day care had been delegated to the local county welfare departments. It was estimated in the early 70's that 95 % of family day care was unlicensed and unregulated. Licensing was an ineffective method of regulation. During the years of our project one FDC home was closed by licensing agency through court procedures.

* there were only a handful of large family day care homes in the state. Almost all other family day care program had six or fewer children and there were no organized systems.
* to become licensed a provider had to show that she had another income, meaning that she had to have a husband who worked or had to have been widowed with some sort of legacy. Family day care was often a service which was unknowingly subsidized by the provider. " I like being with children and I can earn some 'pin money.'" was an often heard statement.
* there were family day care organizations that were established for the purpose of obtaining insurance. In fact, as far as we could observe during the initial stages of our family day care project, the most significant reason given for being licensed and joining a family day care organization was to obtain low cost insurance.
* there was no direct subsidization of family day care, other than through income disregard, which means that an AFDC mother could use part of her subsidy for paying for child care. There were no support services: no food and nutrition program, no educational programs designed especially for family day care

providers.

I well remember a discussion that I had with a State administrator who had just been put in charge of the subsidized child care programs in California. I was discussing the importance of making it possible for family day care providers to receive some of the child care monies that were becoming available for low income family consumers. After all, who could better serve these families who were in need of care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers? His answer to me was that there was no way that it would be possible to subsidize family day care. It was not a system that was manageable. This would require cutting checks for hundreds of family day care providers, to speak nothing of the amount of supervision and monitering that would be required. And besides, he offered, we shouldn't have babies in child care.

I also remember some of the rather humorous as well as sad incidents in the early 1970's that some of you may also remember:

* One of the things most requested by the providers in the Community Family Day Care Project was more information about child development practices taught by an "expert" in the field. We hired a person known to us for her expertise in teaching this subject -- she was a "hands on" teacher with a wealth of experience, and her classes were well received by nursery school and child care personnel. This would be her first time working with family day care providers.

  Her first (and only) class began with the uses of play dough and the importance of this kind of tactile experience for children. She brought cookie cutters, rolling pins,

garlic presses, and other kitchen accoutriments and accessories. Our well meaning teacher spent a good deal of time explaining where one could obtain these tools (at the local Salvation Army or surplus stores) and how to make and present brightly colored play dough. After a very attentive, polite and puzzled group listened and watched for a decent amount of time, one provider asked if making real dough for bread or biscuits might be a substitute for play dough and kindly pointed out that these accesories were always available in most kitchens. Perhaps this class turned out to be more of a learning situation for project staff than for the providers. It taught me that many of the child development materials we use in child care centers have their source in our homes. And yet, as educational programs for FDC developed, most were modeled after center care rather than accepting the home as a learning environment and taking advantage of what naturally exists. Actually centers should be modeled after homes in terms of comfort, softness, and opportunities for togetherness and privacy.

By the way, after our experience with an "expert," our classes were self-taught by the providers using the rooms of a home as the subject for each discussion. One of our more successful efforts was Bathroom 101. We collaged and painted a mural depicting all of the kinds of learning that took place in the bathroom. The mural was hung in the entry of Pacific Oaks College Children's School and was a topic of discussion, a little controversy, and great fun by parents, children, and staff at Pacific Oaks.

* I also remember with some concern the first time that all of the California regional family day care organizations came together under the auspices of our project. It was our hope that a statewide organization would result and would be able to speak with one voice about the issues of family day care. We had helped with the birth of WATCH, (Women Attentive to Children's Happiness),a self-help organization of FDC providers in Pasadena, and we had noted improved communication, sharing of information and cooperative ventures among members. Why not make this possible on a statewide basis?

The organizing effort was very much like human development with all of its ups and downs,struggles for autonomy and independence, learning about trusting and distrusting, and playing out personal securities and insecurities. There were some victories together with a good deal of pain and sorrow -- good people were hurt and dropped by the wayside. The result was not one statewide group, but the same regionalized organizations -- sometimes undercutting each other. However, a sense of competence and self worth in being part of a FDC organization gave these groups power and a presence of which state legislators, regulators, and bureaucrats took notice.

That was yesterday and what is it like today?

YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

TODAY

As I continue the word portrait of today, the colors are clearer, more vibrant and yet the background remains soft and muted. We have come a long way from those days in the early 70's. What are the differences?

* Family day care is a recognized profession. Can you imagine a NAEYC conference without any workshops addressing the topic of family day care? Can you imagine a piece of significant child care legislation being written that does not include family day care? Can you imagine an important child care study that would exclude family day care? Family day care providers belong to national, state-wide, and local professional growth organizations -- and they are welcome members. This Save The Children conference would not have been possible 18 years ago. The communication system, the motivation or the money to attend such a conference was not available. And who would you have as speakers? Nixon was president, and he believed that child care was Sovietizing our children. Mary Dublin Keyserling who was considered the national child care expert had just completed a study of child care and said:

> "Council members, seeing family day care homes at their best felt they sometimes offered developmental opportunities fully equal to that available in superior centers. While nine percent of the homes observed were thought to be providing "superior" care, 28 percent were regarded as

"good." Half were custodial in nature providing no educational or other services beyond the mere meeting of physical needs. An additional 11 percent were regarded as "poor" or very poor. Some of the latter provided the worst horror stories encountered."

* Family day care licensing and regulation have become more serious. With the advent of child abuse horror stories in child care, states have spent more money and effort to regulate all of child care. As family day care has become more visible and regulations have had more input from providers, licensing and registration have become more viable options. Providers connected with support services such as the Food and Nutrition program and Resource and Referral agencies have had some regulatory requirements that must be met.

* While more support services are still needed, there is now a panoply of programs available to providers: toy loans, home visitors, classes especially for and appropriate to family day care are being offered in accredited institutions of higher learning, often taught by a FDC provider. The development of I&R's or R&R's have been a vital support service and a source of much needed recruitment of family day care homes.

* Family day care has become more business-like. Many providers have written contracts, have had to obtain business licenses and know how to run a small business for a profit. Family day care has become more expensive over the years,

while the charge for center care has decreased. In West Los Angeles, we are seeing center child care providers turning to family day care as a more rewarding and profitable profession: they can be their own boss, work with fewer children in the comfort of their own home and earn more money, even after expenses.

* Family day care is also part of the subsidized system. In California, the Alternative Payment program enables payment to individual FDC providers for child care at local market prices.

* With the increased visibility of family day care, employer-based systems have been initiated.

* Insurance rates, once reasonable with excellent coverage, have become outrageously expensive with minimal coverage.

* More and more research is being conducted. With the National Family Home Study conducted in the late seventies, family day care has surfaced as an area of concern. I fear that much of the research is being conducted by those who have a center bias and just as I'm tired of the "My Fair Lady" song that asks "Why Can't a Woman Be More Like A Man?" I am annoyed by the researchers who trill "Why Can't FDC Be More Like a Center?"

Today, family day care is at the crossroads. It is being researched and studied and compared to other forms of care. Attention is on the whole child care field and national and local policies are beginning to be developed. While 18 years ago, child care was

considered a welfare issue, mostly for the working poor, for welfare recipients or for parents who were somehow forced to work due to unhappy circumstances, child care is now considered a service that may help solve our country's problems:

A. Middle class and affluent parents use it. Now that middle class and affluent parents need child care, it has become a legitimized service.

B. Politicians use it. Have you seen a politician lately who hasn't put child care in his/her platform? Representative Patricia Schroeder Has toured the country talking and toasting child care.

C. Employers use it. The light is dawning for employers that unless they attend to the child care needs of their employees, they may have difficulty recruiting and retaining valuable workers. To date, there have been a few significant nods to family day care: The Work/Family Information and Referral service (mainly to FDC homes) and the Steel Case FDC system to name two.

D. Children are also being considered in the child care picture. The fact that children may benefit from quality child care experiences is beginning to be understood. Respite child care is being recognized as a way of keeping families together whether the parent or child is disabled emotionally or physically --and it is very cost effective in economic and human terms. Physically disabled children are being mainstreamed into existing programs and we're all learning

from the experiences.

Quality care is probably the biggest issue facing family day care today. I recently attended a meeting in Washington where I raised my concern about the fastest growing part of the child care field: center infant care. I have seen too many babies warehoused in poorly operated infant care programs, and I worry. Another person raised his concern with the over-enrolled family day care homes that had been reported to him. He described the homes with 12 - 15 children, including four babies with only one caregiver.

I must say I have seen family day care homes of poor quality, but never have I been so demoralized as by the apathy and sadness I observed in the children of a poor quality infant center .

It is easy to say that more children are affected in a poor center than in a poor home. But neither is acceptable!

This badly operated infant center program I observed was closed by the licensing department. I don't know what happened to the family day care home. I do know, that it is difficult to close a family day care home through the regulatory process -- although I know more FDC programs are beginning to be faced with this prospect. But licensing or registration continues to be an ineffective method of maintaining good child care standards.

The question I must still raise is how do we work toward quality? I believe the carrot and stick approach doesn't work. There's been too little carrot and too much stick. By its nature, FDC is a self-motivating operation -- the push toward quality must come from within

and be augmented with good, appropriate support services. It would be wonderful if there were rewards for excellence.

We all know good providers who take too many children, who could learn better ways to take care of themselves, who could improve communication with parents and who could quickly utilize new knowledge about children's growth and development and health and safety. I believe the solution to these problems is the major challenge for family day care providers today.

TOMORROW

I'd like to close my talk with you by painting what I see in my crystal ball for the year 2000:

1. A former family day care provider who has been serving as Secretary of Labor will toss her hat into the Presidential ring. The Harris poll will give her a 50/50 chance to win the election, because of the strong organizational backing of Child Care Providers of America, Parents for Child Care and the NAEYC. She also has never had an extra-marital affair (who has time when you're a family day care provider?), has said "no" to dope and could never be called a wimp.

2. Center directors will be coming to family day care organizations to recruit trained personnel to work in center programs. The stress of working in large, institutional settings of 200 and more children has made the recruitment of center personnel difficult. Since family day care organizations have developed a benefit package for health, dental, psychiatric and

eye care, family day care has become a popular profession to enter.

3. Family day care providers have established their own insurance company. Rates are reasonable and claims are few. Lawyers in need of and using child care have spread the word that suits against the Family Day Care Aetna Insurance Company should not be filed without compelling evidence of negligence.

However, the future still has some cloudy areas. They're murky, but have some trails left from the past. I can see some of the signs developing now. Not only are centers growing larger, but family day care homes are also caring for more children. They may take care of 10 or 12 or 15 children with two caregivers. The trend toward bigger does not seem to me to be an appropriate direction for family day care. Most homes are not set up for large groups of children and this grouping changes the kind of care given. I have seen excellent, large family day care homes operating--but the providers are extremely skilled and take extraordinary measures to maintain the home-like, family-based qualities for which family day care is known and recognized. It is a trend I will watch with openness and concern.

And the other area of cloudiness is the adversarial position in which parents and providers may be placing themselves. As family day care providers become more professional, I have noted a distance developing between providers and parents. This trend can result in the loss of family day care's greatest allies and friends--the parents with whom we work. As family day care becomes more professional and

business-like with contracts, rules and regulations, there is a risk of loosing the flexibility that makes it so unique and wonderful. A balance must be created to maintain this important alliance between providers and parents.

So as I finish my portrait of the many whom I admire and respect, and who care for our country's children, I'll sign my name and hope you will understand that the strokes have been broad, some sharp but all have been placed with thought, experience, love and care.